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SUBJECT: ALGERIAN MFA PRAISES NEGROPONTE REMARKS IN MALI,
SAYS MALI WILL BE TOUGHER ON ALGERIAN TERROR GROUPS

Classified By: Ambassador Robert Ford, reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

. (C) SUMMARY: A senior Algerian MFA official told the Ambassador November 28 that Algerian President Bouteflika highlighted border security issues during the November 25-26 visit of Malian President Toure to Algiers. Reportedly, Bouteflika pressed Toure to do more to confront Algerian terrorist groups circulating in northern Mali, and Toure agreed. (In this regard, MFA officials expressed appreciation for remarks made by Deputy Secretary Negroponte during his recent visit to Bamako.) Bouteflika also pressed the Malian President to ensure the implementation of the terms of the Algiers Accord brokered between the Malian Government and Tuareg rebels. The MFA official said this would include more meetings of the existing security follow-up group and the establishment of a new economic development group. The official said that Algeria is watching U.S. military engagement with the Malians and is comfortable with it since the GoA wants Mali to develop more capable security forces. Meanwhile, the MFA official said the GoA is watching with concern the instability in northern Niger as well, especially after a November 8 attack on a small Algerian airport by a group coming out of Niger. Algeria, he stated, doubts that the Niger government has the security resources to repress Nigerien Tuaregs and should cut a political deal like the Malian President did. End Summary.

ALGERIA WANTS MORE BORDER SECURITY

[12](#). (C) MFA African Affairs Director General Chergui (Assistant Secretary equivalent) told the Ambassador on November 28 that Algerian President Bouteflika pressed hard on border security issues during the visit of Mali President Toure. There were two aspects, according to Chergui. Bouteflika raised the circulation of Algerian-related terrorist groups in northern Mali and urged Toure to be more forceful in confronting them. Toure allegedly agreed. (In this regard, Chergui pointed to the remarks made by Deputy Secretary Negroponte in Mali and said Algeria entirely agreed

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with their thrust.)

[13](#). (C) Bouteflika also emphasized to the Malian President that the GoM must move forward on implementing the Algiers Accord concerning the Tuareg rebels. According to Chergui, the ceasefire in northern Mali is holding. Chergui, said Algeria hopes to have more good news about the ceasefire in the next weeks. (Comment: He likely was hinting at Malian prisoner releases. End Comment.) Chergui said that as per

the Algiers Accord, the three-party committee overseeing security arrangements is to meet regularly. Also as envisaged in the Accord, the Malian Government has stood up two "special units" of Tuareg fighters to help police the border area. Algeria, he said, hopes for more such units, especially as Bamako has now recognized the principle of "special units." Chergui added that there will be a new, second commission to concentrate on economic development issues in northern Mali. Again, the Malian Government, the Tuareg Alliance and Algeria will be represented. The commission is to enable the Tuaregs to decide upon local projects in their region and get help implementing them, according to Chergui.

BOUTEFLIKA WARNS OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

14. (C) Ambassador asked Chergui about Bouteflika's odd remark warning Toure against "foreign interference" during his November 26 official welcoming remarks. (Comment: Both el-Watan and el-Khabr newspapers here, both very respected, have reported that Bouteflika was warning Mali not to engage with the U.S. military. End Comment.) Chergui was adamant that Bouteflika was not referring to the United States. Like the U.S., he said, the GoA wants to see a strong and united Mali and it wants to see Mali develop a stronger security capability. Chergui pointed to Bouteflika's pledge of support to a regional conference that the Malian Government has proposed to address Sahel stability issues. Libya, he claimed, is seeking to be included in such a conference and Bouteflika told Toure in private that the attendance should be limited to Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Algeria. Algeria did not think Libya should be at the meeting, nor should France or the U.S. This was the "foreign interference" to

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which Bouteflika was referring, according to the MFA official. Chergui welcomed U.S. efforts to train Malian forces and added that if Algeria sees the U.S. activities in Mali with which it is uncomfortable, it will not hesitate to inform us.

NIGER: GOA URGING PRUDENCE ON NIAMEY

15. (C) Ambassador pointed to a recent report in el-Watan newspaper here about the November 8 attack on a military aircraft at Djannet airport in southeastern Algeria and asked if the GoA had confirmed that the attackers had come in from and fled back to Niger. Chergui said this was his understanding, although he hastened to add he did not always have the latest security information. He said that Algeria viewed the arms trafficking and instability in northern Niger much as it did the arms trafficking and instability in northern Mali. Another Tuareg group, this time the MNJ, has social and economic demands, he stated. Nigerien President Tandja refuses to negotiate with the MNJ. Instead, he seeks a security solution, but he lacks the resources to repress the Tuaregs in the region. Algeria has told the Nigeriens that they should accept that they need a political solution much as Toure had accepted the need in Mali. At the same time, Chergui underlined, the GoA would not "accept" any Tuareg effort in Niger or Mali to establish a separatist movement. Algeria strongly supports the unity of all the Sahel states, he underlined. The MNJ, he added, has no separatist agenda and should be a reasonable negotiating partner.

COMMENT

16. (C) Chergui is usually very well-informed on Algerian policy on Africa even though large segments of the execution

of policy fall to the Algerian security establishment. As the Ambassador was going into his office, Chergui was bidding good-bye to the Algerian ambassador to Bamako, Abdelkrim Ghraib. In a brief chat before Ambassador sat with Chergui, Ghraib also praised Deputy Secretary Negroponte's public remarks in Bamako and said he thought Algeria and the U.S. were working well together on Sahel stability issues. The November 26 meeting between Bouteflika and Toure lasted about two hours longer than planned, but Chergui wanted to paint a picture of broad agreement between the two men. We defer to our colleagues in Bamako about whether the Malians saw such a convergence. Looking at Bouteflika's public remarks November 26 and Chergui's comments in private, it appears to us that the Algerians were quite forceful in urging Bamako to do more on security and to facilitate Tuareg cooperation on security to be more forthcoming on the Tuareg demands included in the Algiers Accord.

FORD